



SIGNPOSTS

On the Highway To Extraordinary Education

Arizona Adult and Family Literacy Education

Route 1 ~ Winter 2003

ON RAMP

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Under Construction

By Sheryl Hart and Nadine Johnson, Signposts Staff

We would like to introduce **Signposts**, a quarterly newsletter distributed by the Arizona Department of Education's Division of Adult and Family Literacy Education. The mission of the newsletter is to provide an opportunity for information and resource sharing among the Adult Education, Family Literacy and GED Testing communities. The "highway" analogy was chosen as a theme for the newsletter because it truly is an exciting journey we are on as we travel toward our destination of extraordinary education. Because our highway is under construction, we may encounter roadblocks, potholes, detours and traffic jams. But it is important to remember that the journey itself is just as important as the final destination. It is not only about getting there; it is about the routes we choose and the adventures we encounter along the way. The articles in this newsletter give us the opportunity to share these adventures with each other.

In this issue you will find contributions from across the state with articles written from the field and by students. There is an assortment of topics: the teen program in Safford; goal setting strategies in Buckeye; collaboration in Queen Creek, and more. Each contribution represents an important signpost on our journey. As you read through the issue, we hope you will think about your own signposts, potholes and detours you've encountered as you travel on the highway toward extraordinary education!



"The road to success is always under construction." Author Unknown.

SIGNPOSTS MISSION

The **Signposts** newsletter will provide an opportunity for information and resource sharing among Arizona Adult Education, Family Literacy and GED Testing communities.

This publication contains material submitted by students, teachers, administrators and other professionals. Every effort has been made to maintain the character and voice of each contribution with minimal editing. The contents do not necessarily represent the opinion or policy of the agency.



A Message to the Field

By Karen Liersch, State Director, Adult and Family Literacy Education

"There is a law in psychology that if you form a picture in your mind of what you would like to be, and you keep and hold that picture there long enough, you will soon become exactly as you have been thinking." (*William Blake*)

Four years ago this month, Arizona's literacy educators were putting the final touches on a plan to move the delivery system for literacy education in Arizona to nothing short of **extraordinary education for all the learners that we serve**. With commendation and full support, the State Board of Education approved this Five Year State Plan for Adult and Family Literacy Education, and in July of that same year our long journey began.

In this short period of time, we have made extraordinary progress in implementing:

- A learner-centered delivery system which is serving Arizona taxpayers as well as each unique learner in our programs
- A consistent, rigorous, standards-based educational delivery system within both adult literacy and family literacy programs
- Local educational programs staffed by highly-skilled professionals and paraprofessionals, trained in research-based best practices
- A performance-based accountability system which effectively utilizes the reporting of individual learning gains as much to inform instruction as to measure local program performance

Yes, we have made much progress! And yet we have much to do. We were all well aware of the challenge we committed to four years ago, and the difficulties that we might encounter. However, in some ways our challenges are greater today than when we began.

But have no doubt. As a profession, we who are Arizona's literacy educators are not the same group of people we were when we began this journey. An observer might describe the metamorphosis as 'striking' or 'unbelievable'. As a profession, we are up to the challenges presented us. And have no doubt, we will find a way, or we will make a wayto nothing short of **extraordinary education for all the learners that we serve!**

Hold that thought...

Karen



Involving the School District With Adult Education

By Norma Yenez, Queen Creek USD

When people migrate to the United States not knowing a single word of the English language, achieving the "American Dream" becomes much more difficult. However, thanks to programs like Adult Education and Family Literacy in Queen Creek, these people have the opportunity to learn a very valuable tool that will allow them to succeed in this country.

The growth of adult education and family literacy in Queen Creek has been very noticeable in recent years. Because of free child care that is provided, parents have a better chance of going to school. In addition to the childcare, the adult education program offers free tutoring to all district students in second through seventh grade whose parents are attending adult education classes. Throughout the years, the adult education program has been able to retain more adult students in school as well as help district students who are struggling in their education. The program also provides students with services at a social level.

With collaboration between the Queen Creek School District, Family Resource Center, Migrant Education program, the community and other agencies, the adult education program has become a unique example of what can be done. Students from the district high school, community representatives, and other members from different organizations come and volunteer their time as tutors, childcare workers, and teacher aides. The school board is very proud to have such an outstanding program in their community. With the help of the program, they have seen an increase in parent involvement in their children's schools. Every month, all of the staff members are required to submit a report to the school board of directors and inform them of the classes' progress, activities and plans. By doing so, all board members, principals, school district staffs and the community get involved in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs.



Children work on homework while their parents attend ESOL classes



Intensive Goal Setting Strategies in Buckeye

By Dan Vargas, Buckeye ESD

The Extended Family Program (EFP) in Buckeye Elementary School uses goal setting strategies that are creating extraordinary results. The EFP program is going into its fifth year serving the community of Buckeye, Arizona. The idea about doing a weeklong workshop on goal setting was started 3 years ago with the intention of enhancing the participation of families in our program. During this workshop the EFP staff works very hard making sure that parents understand what they want out of the program. We believe that it is extremely important that the parents are clear about the reasons they want to be with us for the entire year.

The first step participants take once they join our program is to decide what they want from the program in terms of family, community, academic achievement, and personal achievement. During the first day of the workshop, they look into the future for one to five years. We encourage them to dream big and set high expectations for themselves. After they have a list of possible accomplishments, we guide them into deciding what are short-term and what are long-term goals.

During the second day participants spend the majority of their time deciding if their selected goals are achievable, realistic, specific enough, and right for them. As this process develops, a lot of revision takes place. Then the participants decide on what are the most important short-term goals for themselves and their families in the four categories mentioned above.

During the third day, we ask and help them to select the most important goal in each category. Next, they write these goals in their own words and make a realistic action plan. With each goal we encourage them to write down the skills and resources they will need to reach their goals, what barriers they may encounter and their action plan to make each goal a reality.

On the last day, they set target dates and create posters with pictures that include their family members. They also write a personal mission statement describing what they are going to accomplish. These posters are then hung all over the classroom and remain there until the end of the year or until they accomplish their goals.

Our job, then, becomes to do all we can to make sure their dreams become realities. We do celebrations throughout the year recognizing their steps towards the attainment of their goals. Parents become extremely focused on accomplishing what they set out to do. This has produced some extraordinary results with the majority of our families. We are very proud of their efforts and the students feel a sense of direction as never before, according to their comments.



Mt. Graham's Three Alternative High School Programs

By Kezia and Patrick O'Donnell, Safford USD

Mt. Graham High School sits at the base of Mt. Graham, beside the Gila River in southeastern Arizona. Providing education from prenatal to graduation and beyond, MGHS accepts the challenge of Safford Unified School District's mission to promote life-long learning through three unique delivery approaches: Alternative Education, Even Start Family Literacy, and Adult Education.

Mt. Graham Alternative High School offers Arizona K-12 Standards based curriculum delivered in an individualized, self-paced format leading to a diploma. As a school of choice, a student must interview and contract to attend, continuing as long as the student: attends regularly, progresses academically, and behaves appropriately. The majority of students attending have a history of disruptive behavior, poor academic standing, are pregnant or parenting, have been identified as dropouts and/or are adjudicated. Others come for our school's flexibility and opportunities.

The **Even Start Family Literacy Program** and its Child Care and Guidance Center, operating out of MGHS, works with teens and their children. Teen parents study toward their high school diploma at Mount Graham, while their children attend Early Childhood Education in our licensed infant/toddler childcare facility. Parents participate in Parent Time, Service Activities, and Parent And Child Together Time each day. Family meals, transportation, health services, home visits, and counseling are provided through our students, support staff and linkages with outside agencies. The Child Care & Guidance Center offers prenatal education for expecting teens, providing a bridge into the Family Literacy Program when their infant arrives.

Our **Adult Education Program** provides adults the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma by completing the identical curriculum offered to our teens. Two recent examples of success are the 76-year-old graduate whose education had been interrupted by WWII, and a parent who met her graduation goal the night before her daughter graduated from another area high school. We don't make it easier, we make it possible.



Infants play at Mt. Graham High School's childcare facility



GED Process Improvements

By Teresa Lax, Arizona Department of Education

What is more difficult than hauling elephants over the Alps or more exhilarating than winning an Academy Award? How about breaking down bastions of bureaucratic barriers? As unlikely as it seems, that's exactly what the GED Process Improvement Team has been busy doing for the last six months. The team: Martha Rosalez, GED Credentialing Specialist, Mel Rife, GED Archival Specialist, Teddy Dumlao, IT Coordinator and Teresa Lax, GED Process Leader, together began this brave endeavor after being charged with the mission to streamline and improve the existing processes until the GED operation was effective, efficient and economical - all this and deliver excellent customer service too!

The result easily qualifies as a success. The team achieved a 40% reduction in paperwork, a significant reduction in re-work and problem related customer service calls, a 90% improvement in turn-around times: from two weeks to two days for some processes and an overall savings in production costs and expenses. In addition, the experience led to the building of a motivated, customer-focused, quality minded team.

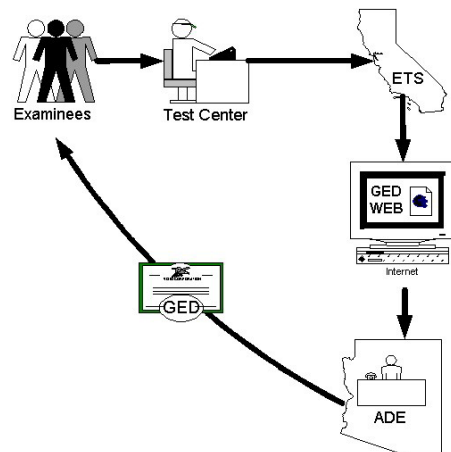
Using a variety of Total Quality Management (TQM) tools, including One-Minute Stories, Five-Step Problem Solving, Work Breakdown Analysis, and concentrated team building, the team began their work by identifying the top 10 major processes, each with its own array of accompanying sub-processes, which most urgently needed re-engineering. Each of those selected were evaluated for their critical customer impact. Once the top three customer focused processes were identified, the team began the quality improvement work in earnest. Milestones such as changing scoring vendors after many years with the same vendor, re-engineering the data management system, and implementing new changes dictated by moving to a new version of the test, were reached by collaboration and solid team work.

The implementation phase is still in progress, with measurement and analysis taking place on a regular basis. Many outworn customer service approaches were discarded along with some outmoded and bureaucratic procedures, resulting in a sleeker, more professional, customer-driven approach to providing excellent customer service in the public sector.

What does this mean to Adult and Family Literacy educators? The reduction in turnaround time for transcripts (from over two weeks to just under two days), unofficial score reports (from several weeks to four-business days after receipt at scoring center), and official score reports (from upwards of 12 weeks to less than three weeks), means that when you've finished an important phase of your job and your clients have passed their GED exam, you can refer them to us with the confidence that we will do our job and deliver the service and respect that your clients have earned.



GED Testing Process Team Members (from left to right):
Teresa Lax, Teddy Dumlao, Mel Rife, Martha Rosalez



What My Students Teach Me

By Lauren Ligouri, Mesa Public Schools

My students are very insightful, wise teachers. After working eight to ten hours landscaping, in a restaurant, factory or at home caring for children, they walk into class with the most radiant smiles and a happy "Good Evening."

The classroom is often full of laughter. The students know that life is to be enjoyed. Every day is a celebration. They show me by their actions how to live each hour with joy; so you will have joyful days, joyful years and a joyful life.

I am humbled by the gracious way my students choose to live. It's easy in America to forget the most essential pieces of life: love, laughter and gratefulness. I think of how my students live such hard-working lives in a country that is unfamiliar to them in words, sights, food and culture. Yet, there is so much dignity and devotion in all that they do. I am humbled by their personal grace. My students elevate my spirit.



Early Childhood Education Standards *By Susan Pimentel*

Arizona's Early Childhood Standards reflect the growing consensus among early childhood professionals throughout the nation that greater emphasis be placed on young children's conceptual learning, especially the acquisition of language and literacy skills. Getting every child to read by grade 3 has become a national and a state preoccupation.

Careful thought (prompted by sound research) has been given about what needs to happen in grade 2, in grade 1, in Kindergarten, and yes, even in the child's first four years of life, to make this laudable goal a reality. Arizona's early childhood community, under the auspices of its Family Literacy Program, responded. During an almost year and a half long development phase in Arizona, more than 35 distinguished early childhood educators and academicians from around the state met every month to write and refine standards not only for reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but also for mathematics, science, physical and social-emotional development and the arts. As a team, they examined significant new research on cognitive development and how children learn. They examined documents written by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and other professional organizations and researched articles and standards written by early childhood education task forces from other states. And they examined models of early childhood education such as the Creative Curriculum, Head Start, Montessori, High Scope, and the Core Knowledge sequence. Team members also brought standards from their own programs to share. One member even supplied the team with copies of his home nation's standards – New Zealand's -- for early childhood programs! This wealth of information – international through local -- was the basis for the development of initial drafts that then went through months of internal and external reviews and revisions to produce final documents.

The early childhood standards underscore the vital role teachers and school communities play in helping children, whose everyday life circumstances have left them disadvantaged, to catch-up with their more advantaged peers. Only by explicitly specifying the competencies and knowledge that all children should share can early childhood educators guarantee equal access for children from all backgrounds and life experiences. By developing and implementing these standards, early childhood educators in Arizona will ensure that a vital core knowledge and skills will become a part of every child's preschool years and, give many children just the "boost" they need to "make it" in life. Long-term studies conducted by the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and others show that children enrolled in programs that provide challenging, but achievable, curricula and engage children in thinking, reasoning, and communicating with others are more likely to perform well

on tests of intelligence, complete high school, and pursue higher education. The positive impact that quality educational preschool programs have on the children they serve cannot be overstated.



Early Childhood Education Standards Team Members



Voices from the Field: An Interview *By Miriam Kroegeer,* Arizona Department of Education

Anna Torrez and Carina Wells are two adult educators whose faces light up when they talk about their family literacy classes and their students. Anna was a former elementary school teacher who, after teaching 3rd and 4th graders for 14 years, "dropped out" and taught part-time with Career Blazers and also coiffed hair part time. However, the lure of the classroom kept calling to her, and she came back to teaching. She's been in Adult Education for eight years, the last three as a Family Literacy teacher. Carina Wells was a teacher's aide in a bilingual, special education elementary school and volunteered as an aide in an evening adult ESOL class. She's been in adult education for 10 years, the first six as an ESOL instructor and the last four as a full time adult educator in a Family Literacy program.

Anna and Carina work with the parents and children in the Family Literacy program provided by the Glendale Elementary School District/Gary Tang Adult Education Program at the Lamar Family Center. Both of them have stayed in adult education because they see how much their students love to learn. Carina noted that the students are so very giving, and share their lives with their teachers, and entrust their teachers with so much. Anna talked about her students having one foot "in" and one foot "out" when it comes to school, learning and living. She wants to be sure that her students can learn and celebrate their learning. Both teachers want their students to learn study skills, develop strong parenting skills, and be involved with their children and in the community. They see themselves as helping the adult learners to focus, rekindle the desire to learn, find consistency in their attendance and their learning, and see them through to a completion and accomplishment. They are just as proud of the student who starts at the very beginning level of literacy and must learn to make the spaces between words, as they are of the student who

(continued on next page)

Voices From the Field (continued from page 5)

has progressed from ESOL to GED study. They are also proud of the other students in the class who encourage their classmates. Anna and Carina believe that effective ESOL teachers are those who have the experience of learning another language as an adult, and they also believe that having teaching experience should be a requirement. They think that Parent and Child Time is one of the most valuable components of the Family Literacy program. Carina is a strong advocate for Family Literacy and would like to see it extended to all families who are interested.

Outside of Adult and Family Literacy Education, Anna calls herself a "split personality" – she would like to spend more time at the beaches of Hawaii, California and Mexico surfing, snorkeling



Family literacy educators Anna Torrez and Carina Wells

and parasailing. In Arizona, she could "dance the night away".

Carina would like to be sure to spend more time with her child and grandchild.



Survey: Program New Year's Resolutions

Buckeye Family Literacy resolves to increase parents' effective communication, both written and oral, with the school so that the children's academic progress is enhanced.

The **Yavapai College** ABE program hopes to better use technology for organizing, planning, communicating, and instructing in 2003.

Mesa Public Schools Adult Education hopes to provide the means for each student to experience a greater sense of inclusion and power within our community.

Yuma Reading Council resolves the following- more time for students, continual improvement, more recognition, keeping up with the changing world, and maintaining a happy and cheery disposition.



Tempe Family Literacy would like to serve more families in 2003. By mid-September 2002, we had 14 families with preschool children on our waiting list. All families qualified for the program, and both parent and child wanted to attend. We would need another preschool class to accommodate them. Families call or stop by almost daily to see if they can enroll in our family literacy program.

Northland Pioneer College's Adult Education Project resolves to uphold student academic achievement as its *foremost* purpose. The project will use standardized assessment and data collection to demonstrate student learning and other successes.

Pima College Adult Education plans to make their reorganization work to institute best practices, including standized assessment, in 2003.

In Chino Valley, **VICTORY's** New Year's Resolution is to increase student enrollment by public awareness using articles in local newspaper, fliers, events and other public relation activities.

Rio Salado Adult Education's highest priority resolution, in terms of scope and effect on the program, is continuing to revise our student intake/assessment/orientation system.



Chandler CORE staff have identified two major program goals for 2003: 1) To integrate a comprehensive and relevant civics education curriculum in ABE, GED, ESOL, and Citizenship classes, and to develop lessons for volunteer tutors to incorporate into their tutoring sessions; 2) To strive for post testing assessment for all students every 45 hours of class attendance. An additional goal we always strive for is to laugh with our students and as a team!

TIA's Learning Center in Prescott is making recruitment our number one resolution for 2003. Some new ideas: Family Literacy staff will visit all PUSD ESOL sites and attend staff meetings; create an English/Spanish vocabulary book to better communicate with ESOL potential students; plan a potluck with families where they invite a friend- have them bring cultural dishes with recipes and create a recipe book.

Tempe Adult Education Program's resolution for 2003 is to enhance the educational excellence in the Program by continuing to learn, grow and change while improving the quality of life of all students, faculty and staff touched by the Program.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



A standardized assessment system was implemented statewide on December 2, 2002. All state-funded adult education and family literacy programs now use TABE for ABE/ASE students and BEST for ESOL students.

Five adult and family literacy educators (Gloria Williams, Leo Lundholm, Virginia O'Rourke, Micki Ulrich, and Miriam Kroeger) are participating in training for AZ Reads, a statewide initiative to ensure that all children start school ready to read and to support families to promote the foundation for literacy development at home.

Crane ESD and Yuma ESD received a Migrant Education Even Start joint grant award.

ADE Adult and Family Literacy Education received a Migrant Education Even Start grant award. The grant will allow the development of an infrastructure and network to provide family literacy services statewide to migrant families.

A new Migrant Family Literacy Program in Pinal County has been funded through a federal grant.

Isaac ESD received a Community Technology Center grant award to use technology and the Internet to provide comprehensive adult education and family literacy activities.

UPCOMING EVENTS



January 25, 2003 Arizona Association of Lifelong Learning Mini-Conference, Yuma, AZ

February 7, 2003 Educational Technology Task Force meeting, Phoenix, AZ

March 2003 Applications submitted to ADE for participation on the following adult educator teams: Public Information Task Force, ESOL Standards Revision, Technology Standards

March 2003 Financial Literacy and Parent Involvement Train the Trainer Workshops

March 16 – 18, 2003 National Center for Family Literacy Conference, Long Beach, CA

March 25 – 29, 2003 TESOL 37th Annual Convention and Exposition, Baltimore, MD

March 31 – April 2, 2003 Migrant Education Even Start Conference, Washington, D.C.

April 24 – 26, 2003 Mountain Plains Adult Education Association Conference, Reno, NV

April 27 – 30, 2003 COABE National Conference, Portland, OR -and- National Migrant Education Conference, Portland, OR

May 23, 2003 GED 2002 Reunion Workshop, Phoenix, AZ



January 8, 9 & 10, 2003 Adult and Family Literacy Education Directors' Institute, Mesa, AZ



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Please email us with comments, questions, concerns and ideas for future articles at:

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